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SOME PHASES OF LIBRARY-STUDY-ROOM MANAGEMENT

HANNAH LOGASA

Librarian, University High School, University of Chicago

It is hard to imagine a more dreary, uninteresting place than the ordinary study-room—a room bare of books, magazines, and maps, and furnished with screw-down desks and chairs. It is a place in which to study, without study-tools; as well have a laboratory or gymnasium without apparatus. Psychologically this room has a decidedly undesirable effect on the pupils. The atmosphere and traditions of the room are conducive to idleness. The room serves but badly as a place of diversion, because of the many rules to be observed in it, and does not function in the school as a factor in building up mental forces.

The library-study-room arrangement has very promising possibilities. Books, pictures, magazines, maps have the same psychological effect on pupils, as regards mental association, as the paraphernalia of the laboratory, and they are placed in the study-room for the same purpose, *use*. Books are the tools necessary to enable teachers and pupils to clear up hazy points, to illuminate, to illustrate. Library facilities are necessary to make study a profitable part of school work, to make supervised study effective.

The cultural value of the combined library-study-room is obvious. In a great measure the reading taste of the public determines our present-day type of literature and drama. The reading public of the future is in the making in our high schools. As a rule, elementary-school teachers and children's librarians have taught children to enjoy good literature suitable to their ages. We in the high school have fallen short in this respect. Pupils of high-school age are turning from what is worth while to the poor and sensational in literature. We have made the companionship of good books and magazines one of the distasteful aspects of adolescent experience. The librarian cannot altogether counteract this;

but she can, by having good, interesting books and magazines in the library, by means of bulletin-board notices and articles in the school paper, lead pupils by indirect means to develop a discriminating reading taste. The reading habit is not formed for the day or the year, but remains to bless the leisure hours of many days and years.

Every pupil, sooner or later comes in contact with the study-room and this offers a wonderful opportunity for the observation of the psychological attitudes of pupils. A knowledge of the physiology and psychology of adolescence is necessary to a correct interpretation of these attitudes. Deductions made from observation are not always accurate, but these deductions serve as a working basis. It is needless to say that the librarian-teacher in charge of the study-room must combine the practical purposes of both professions and have in addition adequate preparation for study-room management.

Physical conditions in the library-study-room such as light and ventilation should have scientific attention. The room should be so placed in the school building that all unnecessary noises are eliminated.

The study-room, if it is to serve the school, must be in close touch with every department of the school; must know the aim of each department and the progress made in the teaching of the subject. Discussion with teachers about the study-habits of pupils will be of inestimable value to both librarian and teacher, and will often explain inability in given pupils to meet lesson requirements. If the co-operation is so close that pupils who fail are reported to the librarian, it makes possible the remedying of faulty study-habits, with little loss of time in experimentation. The librarian's report to the office on the study-habits of pupils makes it possible to know how the pupils study and the results obtained. That there is a direct relation between study-habits and classroom efficiency is certain. One reacts on the other.

In the University High School, the report on the study-habits of the pupils is of value to the school. We find that pupils reported as poor in their methods of lesson preparation are almost invariably poor in classroom recitations. Of the twenty-nine pupils reported as poor in study-habits, twenty-five pupils received a grade of 60

or below in two or more subjects. Improvement in study-habits resulted in better recitations. Teachers utilize the library report in discussing with the parents the work of the pupil. This helps to explain why the pupil is unable to meet his school obligations. The report has had a good effect on the pupils, in that the marks received for study gave an incentive for improvement, even though that mark carried with it no credit.

The report is sent to the principal at the end of each semester, on typewritten sheets $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ inches, and is alphabetical in arrangement.

LIBRARY REPORT

DATE _____

Name of Pupil	Department	Study-Habits	Remarks
A.....		Fair	Short periods of concentration. Capable of better work. Improvement slow.
B.....		Poor	Lack of concentration. Eleventh-hour study.
C.....		Good	Concentration.
D.....		Poor	Immature. Diffusion of attention.
E.....		Very good	Anticipates needs of lesson. Organization. Concentration.
F.....		Fair	Partial concentration. Application. Results may not equal effort.
G.....		Fair	Department interferes with efficiency of study habits. Wastes time.

Just as the atmosphere of the laboratory is conducive to scientific research, the study-room atmosphere should make for concentration. Even a study-room must have an ideal; that ideal should be work. Work is constructive and will show results in better classroom recitations. Quiet is the ideal in many study-rooms; it is a negative quality, however; pupils may be quiet and still accomplish nothing of value. Work is a constructive habit; it is vigor applied to no matter what task, and will apply equally to play. Pupils may at first be puzzled by the curtailment of their inalienable rights of idleness, but they soon find that study and

completed lessons mean less home study and thus give time for other interests. They find that the study-period has a practical value for them. The spirit of the room should be one of relaxation, of accomplishment by normal stages. Tenseness is neither necessary nor desirable; it does not accomplish results proportional to the nerve force expended and is a strain on the pupil's vitality.

We often hear discussions of the trying phases of adolescence. The complaint that pupils of high-school age "won't stay put," that problems whether of subject-matter or of discipline must be solved again and again, is true in the study-room. Pupils change in their methods of work and attitude toward study. In rare cases pupils change from efficiency and ability to focus attention, to disconnected thinking and unwillingness to meet the hard problems of school life. Here, with infinite patience, the study-room librarian must help to build up again the desired habits. The condition may be due in a given pupil to the physiological aspects of his age, to fatigue, to overwork, or to loss of sleep, and it should receive prompt attention. Tact is needed to approach some phases of experience, but when conditions must be remedied the librarian should not let false modesty stand in the way of evident duty and service.

Individual differences in the study-habits of pupils are great, showing graduations from the alert pupil who plans for his study-period and makes every moment profitable, down to the pupil who will not focus his attention on his lessons and spends the study-period in idleness. The length and degree of concentration vary.

In all groups, there are a few pupils who are naturally studious, who have good study-habits without having been trained thereto. The greater number, however, have effective study-habits because of training.

Many pupils do not concentrate fully; they concentrate only partially. They look at a sentence and grasp the meaning indifferently well; they do not weigh and consider; they take the statement of the printed page as gospel truth and are too indifferent to form an opinion. They memorize words and do not grasp the underlying principles; this serves very poorly as a connecting link between the past and future learning processes.

Eleventh-hour study, the feverish haste to accomplish a task at the last moment, has all the earmarks of concentration but does not accomplish the same purpose. It is a gymnastic memory process which gives no time for assimilation. Its results serve only for the time being and are not a part of the pupils' mental stock.

Failure to concentrate is sometimes due to the fact that the pupil has reached a difficult point in the lesson and is unable to advance. After futile attempts he gives up in despair and is idle. To help him over the difficulty requires an insight into the pupil's character. There are pupils who are willing to meet their study-obligations, others who succumb to the first hard problem. Expect of pupils an honest attempt to master the difficulty; if that attempt is made, help them to help themselves. In some subjects reference books or maps will give the desired information. The cases where a dictionary has made clear what was obscure are numerous. Going over a lesson assignment with the pupil by making him think out the lesson in simple terms will make for self-reliance in the future.

There is much to be said in favor of both group and individual study. Individual study is best suited for study-room environment, and that type of study should be the rule there. Social study for special lesson assignments is occasionally necessary. When that is allowed, great care should be taken to see that the work is not all done by one member of the group, and that the others are not silent partners with nothing to contribute to the thought. In a Smith-Jones study combination, it is difficult for the teacher to determine just the amount of mental training received by Smith and by Jones respectively. On the whole, individual study should be insisted upon in the library-study-room. It makes for initiative, resourcefulness, and ability to meet responsibilities.

Atmospheric conditions, approach of holidays, school excitement, all have their effect on the study-room. Here the excitement is apparent in the pupils' restlessness, in their inability to get down to actual work. This state is best recognized and dealt with sympathetically. At such times pupils have distractions which make absolute seriousness of purpose impossible. We may expect

an attempt at concentration, but that it will be of short duration is to be expected.

Study-room noises are of two kinds, busy noises and disturbing noises. It is not hard to distinguish them. Busy noises are highly desirable—the motor adjustments necessary to concentration, the sound of pencils and pens, the pupils going to the shelves for books, make noise that is not distracting. When we speak of undesirable noises we enter into the realm of discipline. Intentional whispering about subjects not intimately connected with the task in hand, annoyance of one pupil by another, are some of the types of behavior most common. “Work” is a remedy for pupils who make disturbances. Keep them so busy that they will have no time for anything but “busy noises.”

The “Study Helps” of the University High School grew out of the needs of the pupils for a formulated statement of how best to acquire good habits of study; to give, as it were, a content to lesson preparation. Necessarily these suggestions had to be general enough to be applicable to the various subjects in the curriculum and elastic enough to allow the teachers to adapt them to their methods of teaching. We made a systematic campaign for study betterment. The “Study Helps” were distributed to all the pupils to be pasted in textbooks and notebooks; teachers in the classrooms gave concrete examples of how best to follow them. We feel that the results from this have well repaid us for the stress laid on this important part of school work.

STUDY HELPS

FOR STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL

The habits of study formed in school are of greater importance than the subjects mastered. The following suggestions, if carefully followed, will help you make your mind an efficient tool. Your daily aim should be to learn your lesson in less time, or to learn it better in the same time.

1. Make out a definite daily program, arranging for a definite time for each study. You will thus form the habit of concentrating your thoughts on the subject at that time.
2. Provide yourself with the material the lesson requires; have on hand maps, ruler, compass, special paper needed, etc.
3. Understand the lesson assignment. Learn to take notes on the suggestions given by the teacher when the lesson is assigned. Take down accurately

any references given by the teacher. Should a reference be of special importance, star (*) it so that you may readily find it. Pick out the important topics of the lesson before beginning your study.

4. In the proper use of a textbook, the following devices will be found helpful: index, appendix, footnotes, maps, illustrations, vocabulary, etc. Learn to use your textbook, as it will help you to use other books. Therefore understand the purpose of the devices named above and use them freely.
5. Do not lose time getting ready for study. Sit down and begin to work at once. Concentrate on your work, i.e., put your mind on it and let nothing disturb you. Have the will to learn.
6. In many kinds of work it is best to go over the lesson quickly, then to go over it again carefully; e.g., before beginning to solve a problem in mathematics read it through and be sure you understand what is to be proved before beginning its solution; in translating a foreign language, read the passage through and see how much you can understand before consulting the vocabulary.
7. Do individual study. Learn to form your own judgments, to work your own problems. Individual study is honest study.
8. Try to put the facts you are learning into practical use if possible. Apply them to present-day conditions. Illustrate them in terms familiar to you.
9. Take an interest in the subjects taught in school. Read the periodical literature concerning these. Talk to your parents about your school work. Discuss with them points that interest you.
10. Review your lessons frequently. If there were points you did not understand, the review will help you to master them.
11. Prepare each lesson every day. The habit of meeting each requirement punctually is of extreme importance.

Study-helps are very indifferent in their results unless every member of the faculty explains those that apply to his department—explains them not once, but many times. Study-helps really to help every pupil, to be the means of raising the scholarship standard of the school, must have the whole school back of them. Study-helps will not of themselves correct study-habits.

Whether we are training pupils for college or to take their place in the business world, they should be taught how to think, how to organize their work, how to spend their leisure time. By enriching the subject-matter of study through library facilities, by helping pupils to form efficient habits of study, by influencing them to develop a discriminating reading taste, the library-study-room contributes to the pupils' mental equipment.